Henry iv., King of France.

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Three Letters written by the *King of Nauarre, first Prince of the* bloud and chiefe Peere of France to *the States of the Cleargie, Nobilitie* and third eſtate of France.

More:

A Letter from the ſayd King to the Gouernors and Communaltie of the Towne of Paris.

All faithfully tranſlated out of the French.

AT LONDON,
Imprinted for Edward Aggas. 1586.

BRITISH MUSEUM

To my Maisters
the Cleargie.

My Maisters, vnto you doe I complaine both in body & commune, and yet cannot beleeue that you all are led by one selfe spirite in whatsoeuer is contriued against me. You cannot be ignorant what moderation I haue euermore vsed in your behalfes, euen in the rigours of armes, neither are you to seeke of those iust necessities whereinto I haue sometimes bene reduced, & I assure my selfe that euen in your consciences you are able to lay the fault wher it ought. Thus much I can say, that I neuer enfringed the peace of any iolitie, but may truely affirme that I haue attributed my iust sorowes & discontentmets, and that in diuers sorts, vnto the welth and quiet of this Estate. Those men, my Maisters, if you marke them well, whom with your habilities you doe assist to my destruction, haue not taken the like course: of perticuler ambition they haue made zeale to the Church, & of their priuate dislikes a publick warre: neither haue they moreouer made any conscience to kindle the fire throughout ỹ fower quarters of this Realm, so to enioy the pleasure of putting the King to trouble, and hauing by an vniuersall calamitie found meanes to reuenge such disgraces as they

imagine themselues to haue receiued at his hands. The Lord open your eyes and graunt you grace to enter into the bottome of their entents. I feare not (as knoweth God) the mischief that may befall me, either of your coyne or their weapons: both the one and the other haue often enough bene employed in vaine: I lament for the poore innocent people, who, almost alone, doe beare these follies: I moane euen a great number of you that doe contribute to the ambition of these perturbers, you of your pouertie, they hardly of their haboundance: and principally I bewaile the fault that you all doe commit, some vpon one affection, others of an other, who one day shall be to aunswer to this Realme and your Countrie for so many miseries and hazardes whereinto (euen to your costes) you doe plunge it: you, who by your vocations ought to bee the pillers of publicke tranquilitie, shall aunswere before God for so much innocent bloud spilled: for such disorders, and vices of that warre that you nourish, which bringeth in the howlings, cryes and languishing, of so many poore families whome your aboundaunce ought either to nourish or relieue, which you make instruments of their miserie, cause of their hunger and scourges of the Commonwelth. You may alleadge *zeale of the Church*, and I am content to beleeue that some of you are driuen thereby. What shall the posteritie then say, that you haue neelected my proffers? that you haue wished rather to bring all into confusion then to frame your selues to a Counsaile, which in

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my expresse declaration I required at the Kinges hands? That you had rather proceede euen to bloud then quietly to cõferre vpon the sence of the Scriptures? That you haue preferred the meanes to subuert the Estate, before the way to conuert the soules which you thinke to be strayed, yea euen my person beeing therein touched, whom truely you ought rather to instruct then to destroy? Those persons that doe abuze your zeale doe well enough knowe that it is vnpossible for them to performe their promesse, I say, by force of armes to roote ẏ Religion wherein I doe liue. They seeke not the reunion but destruction of the Realme: and call to mind that heretofore in vaine vnder the same pretence they caused you to sell your Temporalties: remember also that your coyne was consumed and your deuotion to furnish them, quenched, before you could finde euen any small successe in your deliberations. They proceede further: some of the Cleargie, (I will not beleeue that many of them haue consented to such a confederatie) haue sollicited the Pope against me, and at his hands haue obteyned a certaine declaration whereby I am exhibited for a pray, and declared vnhable the succession of this Realme. Thincke not my Maisters that these Thunderbolts doe any whit astonish me, for it is God ẏ disposeth both of Kings and Kingdomes, and your predecessors, who were both better Christians and better Frenchmen then the fautors of this Bull, haue sufficiently taught vs that Popes haue not to deale with this Estate. Vn-

ly it grieueth mee that contrary to all good manner there should be to be found any so inconsiderate persons as at Roome to procure the consulting vpon and deciding of the succession of a liuing King and that in the flower of his age: For whereto may that bee good, except to raise vs vp in this Estate either many dispersers or one vsurper. I am sorie that we should let forraine Nations know that our Nation heretofore so deuoute to our Princes, should bring foorth in this age such Monsters, as for either their pleasures or ambition doe put foorth the Commonwealth for a pray, & willingly enuite all their neighbours to the spoyle of this Estate. For, as for my interest GOD hath preserued me that my hope penetrate not beyond the life of my Prince. God in his iust wrath cõfound al such as shall build their greatnesse vpon his Toumbe, euen those that are so prouident as to anticipate his death by their coũsailes. But leauing these speeches I will accompt better of you then your actions doe will me, and I had rather iudge you by my selfe then by your dealings. They haue procured me much mischiefe, I wil not impute it generally to all: I will thinke it a conspiratie but of some who are otherwise vnged thereto, and that peraduenture at the instigation of the Iesuites, the seedes of Spayne and enemies to the wealth of this Estate, and God graunt them to bee as readie to abstaine from the mischiefe to come, as I am now willing to forgiue them. The rest that I haue to say vnto you is that God hath caused me to

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be borne a Christian Prince, I desire the establishment, encrease, and peace of Christian Religion: we all beleeue in one God: wee all confesse one Iesus Christ: we all receiue one Gospell, if vpon the interpretation of the selfe same textes wee fall into controuersie, I suppose the short waies that I haue propounded might bring vs to agreement: I beleeue that the Warre that you so sharply doe prosecute is vnworthy all Christians, yea vnworthy to be amõg Christians, especially those that pretend themselues Doctors of the Gospell. If Warre doe so much delight you: If you conceiue greater felicitie in a battaile then in a disputation: in a bloudie conspiratie, then in a Counsaile, I wash my handes, that bloud that may bee thereby shed bee vpon your heades. I knowe the curses of those that shall suffer cannot light vpon me; for my patience, my obedience and my reasons are well enough knowne. I will expect the blessing of God vpon my so iust defence, whom I beseech to graunt vnto you the spirite of peace and vnion, to the peace of this Estate and vnion of his Church Amen. From Montauban this first of January. 1586.

Your most affectionate and very good friend.

Henry.

To the Lords of the Nobilitie.

MY Maisters, such is your birth that nere enough you approach vnto the affayres of Estate whereby to attribute the right or wrong where it appertayneth, and therefore wee shall neede no long speech to open your eyes. You haue euen in full peace perceiued the originall of the broyles of the League contrary to the quiet of this Realm: you know my patience, notwithstanding they tooke me for their contrary and made me the subiect and pretence of their weapons. You haue seene the Leaguers pronounced Rebelles by the King, and for such prosecuted in all Courts of Parliaments: your selues haue you seene commaunded, armed and fighting against them by the Kings expresse will vnder the authoritie of the Princes of his bloud with the Peeres and principall Officers of his Crowne. I doubt not therefore but vnto you it seemeth straunge to beholde, as in a moment, this alteration: to see your selues armed against the bloud of France: commanded by straungers whom you fought against as perturbers, and which is worse, against those who three daies before were for the seruice of the King and Realme sent for, and commaunded as you, ranged vnder the same auncients and of like will as your selues: But withall you can iudge that the first precepts procee-

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ded of the Kings proper motion, and those that haue followed, of the violēce of the perturbers, For what haue these of the League since done, euen betweene both, whereby to lose the qualitie of Rebelles guiltie of Treazon, perturbers of the peace, which by so many decrees haue to them bene attributed? either what offence haue those of the Religiō committed, by liuing vnder the benefite of the Edicts, whome his Maiestie indifferently summoned to his seruice, who also equally opposed themselues against the common flame, that now they should at the appetite of the sayd perturbers bee expelled the Realme and on euery side pursued to the death? If it be for matter of Religion, was there not expresse Edicts therfore? Were not the same newly reiterated? Can that which is permitted by the lawes of the Realme be accompted an offence? May it be prosecuted with any paine? If it be (as in troth it is) for contrarying the purposes of the League, are not your selues accessaries to that offence? bee not you subiect to the same payne? doe you then seeke your owne ouerthrowe? For what offence are they burdened with except that they are and wil be no other but Frenchmen? Now I come to my selfe, whether you will iudge of me by my self, or by comparison with those of the League: well I knowe that you can not lay the fault vpon me; yea, I knowe that euen in your consciences you doe attribute it to my enemies: They meddle with talke of my Religion, you that know the preeminence of the bloud of France, that

can well say that you owe no duetie but to the same, shall it bee sayde that I must giue accoumpt to the straunger? Is it not enough for mee to satisfie the King and all Fraunce? Hath any one complained that I haue violently entreated him for his Religion? What more could I doe either with reason or Christianlike, thē to craue a good Counsaile? They are also offended with the gouernment of the estate, and haue endeuoured to prouide for the succession thereof: They haue procured the Pope to decide the same at Roome: you therefore that hould the chiefe roume in this Realme, if necessitie had so required, could you be so careless as to suffer straungers to preuent you in that office? Haue you no regarde to your posteritie? Could you oversleepe this duetie? For in all these broyles what haue appeared but *Lorrain*? But in troth either to reforme or trāsforme the estate according to their desires they needed not your helpe: to passe ouer the Estate into a forraine hand was a worke fit for straungers onely to enterprize: to expell France out of France, the processe could not be determined in Frāce, she was to much suspected in such a cause and therefore it must be decided in Italie. They haue directly opposed themselues against mee: I haue offered the combat: I haue stooped beneath my selfe: I haue not disdained to fight with them: I haue done it (God is my witnesse) for the preseruing of the people from destruction, and the sparing of your blood: Of yours, I say, which is principally shed in these miseries. If they

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had any thing to say against mee, had not this beene most honorable for them? If in heart they sought the wealth and benefite of this Estate, did not I set them in a fayre way? There haue bene such found as haue hazarded their liues for the safegarde of their Countrey, what iudgemẽt then may you giue of those who for sauing themselues out of daunger can be cõtent to see the ouerthrow of a whole estate?

You professe your selues to be men of honor, what wrong then doe they to their honors who will not accept of so good a way? or what iniurie doe you to your owne in accompanying them against me? You that would make a conscience in assisting a fauorite against one of your neighbours. Thincke not my Maisters that I feare them, I know what strength may doe against me: sooner shall they bee wearie of assaulting me then I of defending my selfe: many a yere haue I borne their hunt whẽ they were much stronger and my selfe farre weaker then now. You haue experience and iudgement, the passed may resolue you of that that is to come, Truely I bewaile your bloud shed and spilled in vaine which ought to be spared for the preseruation of France: I doe lamẽt that that should be employed against me which ye should keepe for me being that which God hath made me in this Realme, for the ioyning vnder the authoritie and good successe of the King, France to France, where now it serueth to driue it out of France: I doe also moane it that it shall neither be payed or mourned for almost of any: for the King,

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being forced in his will doth not holde himselfe ser-
ued of those that force him, on the other side those
that doe force him wil neuer con you thanke for this
seruice, as knowing that it is the Kings name and
not theirs that you doe serue. My maisters, GOD
graunt you well to consider hereof. The French
Princes are chiefe of the Nobilitie I loue you all,
I feele my selfe wast and weaken in your bloud, a
straunger can haue no feeling thereof. The straun-
ger beareth no interest in this losse. I might com-
plaine of some, I had rather bewaile them, and am
readie to embrace you al: My greatest griefe is that
those whom in minde I doe distinguish, whom also
I knowe to haue bene circũuented, I cannot make
any difference of in the hazard of armes: But God
knoweth my hart: Their bloud be vpon the authors
of these miseries. For my part, my Maisters, I doe
and incessantly will beseech him that it may please
him to open the way whereby his name may be ser-
ued & honored, the King obeyed, the State quieted,
and all orders and degrees of this Realme reduced
to their pristinate dignitie, prosperitie and eminen-
rie Amen. From Montauban this first of Janua-
rie. 1586.

Your most affectionate and
very good friend.
Henry.

To

To my Maisters of the *third Estate.*

MY Maisters, I neede not many woyds to open vnto you the equitie of my cause. Call to mind that when these troyles began wee liued in peace and daylie went foyward better and better. Remember also that notwithstanding the same tended directly against mee, yet foy eight moneths space I stirred not, my patience passed all bounds: neither foyget that I sawe those armies that had bene meetest foy me, ioyned to my enemies and comming against me before I was resolued to defend my selfe. And I sweare vnto you my Maisters, that the hoyroy of a ciuill warre and the sensible apyehension of the miserie and calamities that it bringeth foyth euen benumbed mee and tooke away my sences to my owne domage, had I not perceiued that my ouer long patience redounded to the daunger and destruction of this Realme by giuing the perturbers leisure violently to haue fulfilled their pleasures. In case Religion was the matter, I submitted my self to a Counsaile: if complaints concerning the estate, to an assembly of the Estates: yea, I wished to dyawe vpon my owne person the whole perrill of France foy sauing it out of miserie, voluntarily yeelding my selfe equall with those whom nature hath made my inferiours, whereas they of their owne interest haue made a common

calamitie, and of their priuate quarelles a publicke confusion. I might complaine that my iust offers were not accepted: But to you I do complaine, and yet for you, not for my selfe: I lament these extremities whereby the extreme iniurie to me done hath brought me to that passe that I may not defend my selfe without the detriment of the innocent people. I bewaile my owne condition, that for the warranting of my life you must feele harme and paine, you, for whose relief and wealth I was readie to shed my bloud, if my enemies had not coueted rather to redeeme themselues from the combat, whereto I challenged them, by a parricide against this Estate and by an vniuersall combustion. But herein I take comfort, that your selues can consider the nature of euilles to bee such as cannot bee healed but by some euilles, the cause whereof you are not to attribute to the Surgeon whose purpose is to heale, but rather to him that made the wound, and so consequently in this wound all the griefes ensuing: That in a short space God will graunt me the grace after so many labours to see this Estate purged of those that doe molest it, also to see you enioye so certaine and assured quiet as in small time may cause vs to forget all passed trauailes. Iudge by the effects, I beseech you, of the entents of men to make you reioyce in these troubles. These men would put you in hope that they reforme the abuses of the Treasorie, that they would deminish taxes and subsidies, that they would reduce all thinges to the tyme of

beleeued) would haue beene surnamed fathers of the people. What is come of it? Their warre hauing strangely deuoured on euery side, haue bene determined by a peace wherein they haue had respect onely to their particulet profite, without any mention of you: and which is worse, their peace is as openly cõuerted to a warre against those that remained quiet, whereby the King is forced to double the Impostes, the people exhibited in pray to the man of warre, and France (without the helpe of God) bound to bee murdered of her selfe. For what other is that Edict that is wrested out, but a necessitie layd vpon the King to destroye his people, and with his owne hand to make away himself: At the least if they mẽt not to relieue the people, why were they not cõtent to abuze them? or what had they done that they must be ouerthrowne? They couer these mischiefes with zeale to the Church: The heate of this zeale ought to haue appeared in charitie, & charitie in the vnion of both Religions. What charitie, which endeuoured onely to roote out? What heate of zeale, which hath fiered all the Countrey, and hath set a whole estate in combustion? In the meane tyme vnder pretence that the Clergie hath payed some portion aforehand for the encouraging the Soldiour to begin ỹ warr, ye see them on the way. The people must couer it with some two hundred thousand Crownes or thereabout, which shall binde them hereafter to millions: and to bee briefe, some of the Cleargie to the great griefe of the King, yea and of their owne members

haue for their owne perticuler passions concluded vpon the bargaine and aduaunced the earnest peny: then must the poore people fulfill and furnish the rest whatsoeuer it cost him that cannot doe withall, who onely must beare the losse and can hope for no fruit, beare the whole burden, and endure all the calamitie that may come thereof. My Maisters, this doe I repeate vnto you: I am a Christian Prince borne: I haue sought out and propounded the most Christian meanes to make vp this Estate & reunite the Church. I am a Frenchman borne, I beare part of your calamities, I haue sought all meanes to exempt you from ciuill miseries, I will neuer spare my life to abridge you of them. I know that for the most part you are subiect to this violence, I cõfesse your willes to be thralled. I will not impute to you your actions, you are Frenchmen, I had rather impute vnto you your willes: I desire of you all, who according to your vocatiõs are more subiect to beare the mischief, then to doe it, only your vowes, wishes and prayers. Pray vnto God my Maisters, that by his iudgements he will distinguish those that seeke the felicitie or wishap of this estate, all publicke prosperitie or calamitie. For my part I take him to witnesse that I desire only ỹ welth of this Realme & of you all: I take him for my Iudge whether ambition or perticuler passion hath vged or any whit stirred vp my weapons. From Montauban this first of January. 1586.

Your most affectionate and very good friend

Henry.

To my Maisters of Paris.

MY Maisters, gladly doe I write vnto you as accounpting you the mirror or abstract of this Realme, and yet not to enforme you of the equitie of my cause which I knowe is sufficiently knowne vnto you: but contrariwise to take you to witnesse; euen you who through the multitude of your good eyes are able to behold and penetrate deepest into al that haue passed in this Estate. Ye wot what iudgement the King hath giuen of the authors of these miseries, what in your eares he hath declared and pronounced them to be: He required your assistance against them as against publicke enemies, and that at such time as his will was perfect and free, before violence had wonne any thing at his hands. Whatsoeuer alteration hath since fallen out I know you will impute, not to his wil, but vnto force. And in deede I am not ignorant that sone after being required to furnish the expenses of this warre you could well aunswer that these troubles were neuer begon by your aduice, and that they that had begon them were to beare ỹ charges, and not you: which was such an aunswer as you neuer make in matter concerning the seruice of the King or wealth of the Realme. For in such respect

neuer were subiects more liberall then you? But vndoubtedly when you perceiue that your money goeth not to the reparations, as aforetime you haue bene perswaded, but to the destructiõ of the Realm: when you clerely see that they request not your Iewelles to supply the raunsome of King Frances or his children, or of a King Iohn, but rather to extinguish the bloud and posteritie of France, and to reduce your King to bondage and prison. I know very well that the King hath liked of you therefore, and all good Frenchmen are therein bound vnto you, and especially my selfe in respect of y degree wherein God hath ordeyned me in this Realme and for being (sith it hath so pleased him) of the houshold children. Iudge what neede you had of this warre: you knowe that this Estate daylie waxed capable more and more of peace. If any thing were to be altered in matter of Religiõ, there needed no more (without any innouation) but the summons of a good Counsaile: If in the gouernment of the Estate, the King would not haue refused the ouerture of an assembly of the Estates. And for preuenting these mischieues, you knowe that by expresse declaration I haue submitted my selfe euen by a cõbat to determine whatsoeuer these perturbers could particularly pretend against me. Those therefore that refuse such good meanes are authors of the warre, and of an vnnecessarie and therefore an vniust warre. I who haue desired the same and voluntarily therto submitted my selfe doe finde my selfe discharged of whatsoeuer ca-

calamities may ensue, for from lawfull meanes they haue taken pleasure to driue me into extreme extremities, wherby the armes that I haue taken in hand are naturall and necessarie and so most iust. To be briefe, compare my obedience with their rebellion, my patience with their rash hastinesse, my modest dealings with their immodest passions, and with all this, waye with your selues what they are in this Realme and what I am, so will you conclude that they do me so extreme iniurie ỹ there is no Gentleman in this Realme but would enforce himself, and to whome it were not lawfull to haue reuenge. I speake this in trueth and doe conceiue the consequences hereof, I see the innocent must beare it, but still haue in your mindes that my enemies are those that haue bene declared enemies to the King & the Realme, that they haue troubled the quiet peace, called in straungers, procured the rooting out of the houshold seruaunts, borowed the enemies and employed their meanes, not to my destruction onely, but to the confusion of the whole Estate. Then wil you, my Maisters, impute to their offences all such inconueniences as a iust defence may bring in: you will con them small thanckes for the ensuing calamities, like as you confesse thē authors and causers of the first: for my selfe I shall be sorie for my owne mishap that I shall not be able to put away the vniuersall mischiefe without some mischiefes. At the least I shall reioyce in my owne integritie who would haue redemed them euen with my life, which